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Public Printer of the United States

Transforming the Government Printing Office

*Revitalizing Public Access
to Government Information
in the Electronic Age*

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U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE | KEEPING AMERICA INFORMED
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President Wilkes, distinguished members of the faculty, and students of Brigham Young University–Idaho, it's a delight to be with you here today.

I've been on the job for about two years since I was appointed by President Bush and confirmed by the Senate. It's the toughest job I've ever had, but it's the best job I ever had because of the agency I serve and the community of professionals I work with.

One my highest priorities has been to get out and meet with Members of Congress, Federal agency heads, the library and information communities, the printing industry, the press, and the public to talk about the Government Printing Office.

I've been doing this not just to win support for the GPO and increase our future business opportunities, although those are important goals. I think it's equally important to tell the story of the fundamental role the GPO plays in our system of self-government, and how we're improving on that role today using modern information technology.

The Government Printing Office

The GPO has a proud history, one built on innovation, craftsmanship, scale, flexibility, and a singular dedication to meeting the information needs of the Government and the people. It is one of the Nation's oldest and most venerable agencies, within which the official version of every great American state paper since President Lincoln's time has been produced.

Today, many of the Nation's most important information products, such as the *Congressional Record* and all other legislative information supporting the Senate and House of Representatives, are produced at GPO's main plant, a 1.5 million square foot complex that is the largest information processing, printing, and distribution facility in the world.

Working in partnership with the American printing industry, we also deal with thousands of private sector vendors nationwide to produce print and other information products for the Federal Government, ranging from Supreme Court decisions to IRS tax forms and crop reports for the Department of Agriculture.

Since our doors first opened in 1861, the rich pageant of American history has marched onto the printed page within our walls. It was at the GPO that the text for the Emancipation Proclamation was most likely set, and it was there that ink was put to paper for the declarations of war sought by Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt.

A GPO bookbinder created the leather covers for the surrender documents signed on the deck of the battleship *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay in 1945, and GPO compositors set the type for the United Nations Charter in dozens of different languages.

In the brief time I've been on the job, we've printed the congressional resolution authorizing the use of force in Iraq and the bill that enacted historic Medicaid reform. Last summer we produced the official Government edition of the 9/11 Commission's final report in both print and online formats.

In the coming months we'll produce the record of debates on the reform of Social Security and perhaps a Supreme Court appointment, develop a new electronic passport and other security documents, and begin the process to digitize and broaden public accessibility to the public documents of our history.

For the inauguration of President Bush and Vice President Cheney less than a month ago, GPO printed a vast range of materials, including tickets, maps, signs, programs, and other products, all under the close direction of the Joint Congressional Committee on the Inaugural Ceremonies. Many of these products contained unique and unprecedented security features prepared specifically for the first Presidential inauguration since 9/11.

After the swearing-in was over, GPO staff began formatting the President's Inaugural Address for publication in both the print and online versions of the next day's *Congressional Record*. This became the official record of the text of the President's address, which in partnership with the library community nationwide we will preserve permanently for access by generations of Americans yet to come.



Through war and peace, boom and bust, GPO has been there, producing and distributing the official documents of our Nation. Where we once relied on ink and paper, we now use electronic bits and bytes, but our job is the same: to record the words and actions of our Government and make them available for our people.

Keeping America Informed

Unfortunately, GPO's middle name tends to get in the way of a true public understanding of our mission. That mission is *Keeping America Informed*, a critically important function that sustains one of the keystones of our continuing experiment in freedom: an informed and enlightened citizenry.

The notion of an informed public is one of the great ideas to emerge in the past millennium. And it's an idea that was directly related to the single most important invention of that era: Johann Gutenberg's development of movable type 550 years ago this year.

This was not simply a method of producing ink-on-paper more economically. What Gutenberg did was create a means for easily transferring language and the ideas language conveys to a medium for widespread dissemination. The technologies we have today for accomplishing the same end—computers, e-mail, online systems—are indebted to his vision.

With movable type, printing flourished. In 1455, there were fewer than 30,000 books in the world, all hand-made. By 1500, there were more than 9 million. With increased printing came learning and the spread of ideas, and ultimately with that came the Reformation, the Age of Discovery, and the Enlightenment.

Those of you studying history know that the spread of information and knowledge by printing fundamentally altered the relationship of people to their governments. With more information in public hands, kings and emperors began to lose the ability to justify their rule by divine right alone, and increasingly were subjected to the scrutiny and consent of the governed.

Today, we consider the notion of public access to information by and about the government absolutely fundamental to the notions of political self-determination, self-government, and liberty. But in those days these concepts were revolutionary.

In 1644, the poet John Milton wrote, "Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties," in *Areopagitica*, an essay that has endured through the ages as a classic defense of the right to know.

This right was brought to the American colonies by the first settlers. As early as 1641, for example, the Massachusetts Body of Liberties stated that, "Every Inhabitant of the Country shall have free libertie to search and veewe any Rooles, Records, or Regesters of any Court or office..."

Documents like these were produced by "publick printers" throughout the colonies. Benjamin Franklin—whose 300th birthday the Nation will celebrate in January next year—was the best known of the colonial public printers, and his title was used by Congress to designate the head of the GPO many years later.

By the time of the American Revolution, the concept of public access to government information was widespread throughout the colonies, and it was quickly adopted by the new national government. The Continental Congress passed a resolution requiring "...that the Journals...be printed weekly..." After the Revolution, the Articles of Confederation required that "The Congress of the United States...shall publish the journal of their proceedings..."

During the Constitutional Convention of 1787, the issue of public access to government information came up again. Patrick Henry said, "The liberties of a people never were, nor ever will be, secure, when the transactions of their rulers may be concealed from them..." James Wilson of Pennsylvania said, "The people have a right to know what their agents are doing or have done, and it should not be in the option of the legislature to conceal their proceedings."

As a result, Article I, section 5, of the Constitution requires that "Each House shall keep a Journal of its Proceedings, and from time to time publish the same..." Thus, the right of public access to government information is firmly based in our Constitution. Many years later, James Madison eloquently summarized it when he wrote:



A popular Government without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy; or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance: And a people who mean to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power that knowledge gives.

The GPO itself wasn't established until many years later, primarily to put an end to a system of inefficient and corrupt contract printers that had been used by Congress. But Congress moved early to establish the "means of acquiring" information that Madison spoke of.

GPO's mission today traces its roots to an act of the 13th Congress, which provided for the distribution of congressional and other Federal Government documents on a regular basis to libraries and other institutions in each State for the free use of the public. This distribution was performed variously by the Librarian of Congress, the Clerk of the House, the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of the Interior until 1895, when Congress transferred it to the GPO.

These programs were the antecedents of the GPO's Federal Depository Library Program, under which today we distribute the broadest possible spectrum of Government publications in print and online formats to more than 1,250 public, academic, law, and other libraries located in virtually every congressional district across the Nation, to be used by millions of Americans free of charge every year.

For Idaho, there are 10 Federal depository libraries—in Boise, Caldwell, Lewiston, Moscow (this has included Idaho's regional depository at the University of Idaho since 1907), Nampa, Pocatello, and right here in Rexburg at the David O. McKay Library at BYU/Idaho.

The McKay Library has served as a Federal depository since 1946, selecting the official titles most needed by its patrons. Today it continues to serve under the guidance of library director Thomas S. Liao and documents librarian Shane Cole, and is a perennial leader in the gatecount for all academic libraries in Idaho. The library is really a microcosm of what is going on in the depository program nationwide. While documents on agriculture and education are the top circulating paper items from this collection, BYU-Idaho students enjoy access to thousands of electronic Government titles online, and Government URL's are the top category of URL's accessed from the library's Web site.

Along with the depository program, GPO today also provides public access to the wealth of official Federal Government information through public sales, through various statutory and reimbursable distribution programs, and—most prominently—by posting more than a quarter of a million Government titles online on *GPO Access* (www.gpoaccess.gov), our award-winning Web site that is used by the public to retrieve millions of documents free of charge every month.

A New Direction for the GPO

Just as GPO's middle name gets in the way of understanding our true mission, the nature of what we do, printing—once the world's only mass communications medium—has been eclipsed by revolutionary changes in electronic information technologies, principally the Internet.

Where once printing predominated as the means of communication between the Federal Government and the public, new and ever-evolving strategies of communications are not only possible but have become mainstream practices, changing how America is kept informed. This has put the GPO at the very epicenter of change in the ways people create and use information to communicate, remain informed, research a topic, and preserve a record.

For more than 500 years tangible documents were created using processes that could be seen and felt by craftspeople trained in the art and craft of typesetting, printing, and binding. Authors began with a paper manuscript and saw their words transformed into type and reproduced as pamphlets, catalogs, and books. These tangible products were distributed by booksellers and delivered by the postal service; many found their way into library collections.

Today, for many documents, there is no longer a requirement for typesetting, printing, or binding, and there is no tangible document to make its way to library shelves or otherwise be preserved for the future. Authors begin the process by digitally recording their manuscript on personal computer. By making this document available through a Web portal there often is no need for an original printing of multiple copies.



Such documents are said to be “born digital and published to the Web.” So pervasive and common has this publishing strategy become that we estimate that as many as 50 percent of all Federal Government documents are now born digital, published to the Web, and will never be printed by the GPO.

Therein lies the challenge for the GPO. While printing will not disappear in our lifetime, its role in our lives—and in the lives of the GPO’s customers in the Government and among the public—has been changed forever.

We’re now in a period where we need to sort out what continues to belong in print and what best belongs in electronic information retrieval systems. These systems will allow the public to define their own information needs, then search against databases of information that we construct to retrieve only what they need, only when they need it.

Moreover, as the Government’s sole provider of access to information, it’s our job to develop solutions to the problems that digital information presents. Printed books can last hundreds of years, but how do we ensure that digital information will be easily accessible even five years from now? With so many publishing solutions now available, how do we create a common set of standards for digital documents?

What’s the best way to ensure the security of digital information? How do we deal with the multiple versions of official documents in a digital environment? How do we determine which version deserves to be preserved for the future? What’s the best way to go about making legacy information content—the content now stored in millions of Federal Government documents housed in library and agency collections nationwide—digitally available?

Now that information content is easily separated from the form and format in which it can be delivered, what kind of system can be developed that most efficiently permits content to be repurposed? In the vastly decentralized information marketplace that the Federal Government has become, how do we create a system for capturing that information for convenient and effective public access?



Like every other manufacturing business in America, the GPO must transform itself if it is to remain relevant and viable for the future. The old days of a traditional craft setting with extensive capital investments in heavy machinery are behind us.

While our mission to *Keep America Informed* will remain the same, the introduction of digital technology has changed the way our products and services will be created and how they will look and function, to meet the ever changing needs of the Federal Government and the way public users of Government information now prefer it.

Transforming the GPO

When I arrived at the GPO two years ago, I found an agency that had sustained cumulative financial losses of nearly \$100 million over the previous five years, that had fallen behind in making critical investments in technology and personnel to move the agency forward and solve the problems presented by the digital environment, and that overall faced an uncertain future.

The GPO clearly was an agency in need of transformation. First, our operations needed to be restored in order to prepare us to meet the future. Then, we needed a plan for that future.

Right away, we began putting the GPO’s operations back on a business-like basis. Relying on best practices found throughout the private sector, we carried out a broad reorganization to redirect the GPO’s management and bring new focus to preparing for the future. Simultaneously, we conducted two highly successful retirement incentive programs that reduced our workforce by 550 positions, or nearly 20 percent.

We created an Office of Innovation and Technology to identify new technologies to help us move forward, and we established a New Business Development Office to identify new business opportunities. We initiated several broad scale evaluations to help determine our future course, which ranged from reviewing the suitability of our current buildings to analyzing the scope of our relationships with other Federal Government printing and information organizations.

We redoubled our training programs to help us shape the staffing capabilities we will need for the future. To communicate our new direction and purpose, we created a new logo to demonstrate that the GPO fully embraces the 21st century.

We moved quickly to communicate our new commitment to the Congress, Federal agencies, and the public we serve. We resolved a longstanding controversy with the Office of Management and Budget and the executive branch over Federal printing by proposing a new compact that will enable Federal agencies to choose their own printers, using technology and support services provided by the GPO. The compact not only will reduce printing costs—easing the taxpayers’ burden—but will capture more Federal Government information for public access.

We also began a continuing round of meetings and briefings for Members of Congress, heads of Federal agencies, representatives of the printing industry, the library and information communities, employee representatives, and others to discuss how we can improve the services we provide, and to forge new business relationships. Across the board, we’ve been getting strong support for the direction we’re following.

Our main focus was on ending the losses in GPO’s finances. Recognizing the public’s preference for accessing Government information via the Internet, we closed the GPO’s retail bookstores, an action that saved \$1.5 million in the first year alone. The retirement incentive programs we carried out cut the GPO’s payroll costs by approximately \$38.5 million annually, setting us on the road to recovery. Other cost-saving efforts were undertaken to restore the GPO to a positive financial footing by the end of FY 2004.

I’m delighted to report that we made good on our plans. By the end of last year, we had restored the GPO’s finances to a positive basis for the first time in five years, reversing a trend that had depleted our financial reserves and jeopardized our ability to finance needed technological modernization.



Last year we generated nearly \$11 million in surplus, a \$44 million turnaround from the \$33 million loss we sustained the previous year. Few if any other Federal agencies can make that claim, and it’s a result that would be the envy of many a private sector company as well.

In just under two years, we set the GPO back on a steady course. We’ve worked hard to give our customers the best possible service, developed new and creative ways of doing our jobs, and continued carrying out our shared commitment to transform the GPO into a successful 21st century enterprise.

Along the way we’ve fixed problems as we’ve found them, and we’ve made real and lasting changes in our business lines, administrative systems, and communications efforts—changes that will keep the GPO moving forward and open up whole new fields of opportunity for all of us.

What many people thought wasn’t possible—bringing new life to the GPO—turns out to have been just plain wrong. It goes to show what can happen when you reach for success and believe you can achieve it.

A Strategic Vision for the Future

News of our achievement has spread throughout Congress, among our customer agencies, and to the public we serve. We’ve demonstrated that we can make the GPO work. By doing so we set the stage for the next act in our transformation to unfold.

The stage was also set by the results of a major study of Federal printing and publishing, which was performed in 2003 by the Government Accountability Office—Congress’s watchdog agency—and released in June last year. GPO participated closely in this study and the findings are extremely interesting.

Fundamentally, the GAO stressed that GPO should envision itself as a disseminator of information and place greater emphasis on direct electronic dissemination as our primary goal, rather than printing. This change of focus is in accord with our thinking. Moreover, it is consistent with the original intent behind the GPO: to provide a “means of acquiring” official Federal Government information for the public.

The GAO’s confirmation of our approach and our demonstrated ability to make good on what we set out to do laid the groundwork for the release, in December, of our strategic vision for the future.

Based on months of discussions with Congress, our customer agencies, the library and information communities, the printing industry, our employee representatives, and others, it is a general roadmap of where the GPO needs to go from here: to fully embrace the capabilities of the 21st century to gather, organize, preserve, and disseminate the digital information products of our Federal Government in the coming years. Under this vision:

- The core of our future operations will revolve around a GPO-developed Digital Content System designed to organize, manage, and output authenticated content for any use or purpose. This system will preserve the content independent of specific hardware or software so that it can be migrated forward and preserved for the benefit of future generations.

All known Federal documents, whether printed or born digital, will be cataloged and authenticated and then entered into the system according to GPO metadata and document creation standards. Content may include text and associated graphics, video and sound, and other requirements that may come to be. Content, which may be stored at various quality levels, will be available for Web searching and Internet viewing, downloading and printing, and as document masters for conventional and demand printing, or other digital requirements.

- For our customers in Federal agencies, we'll continue to provide traditional printed products through private sector vendors using GPO's experience and buying power to create the best value for taxpayers. In keeping with the spirit of the GPO/OMB Compact, we'll offer customers more flexibility in choosing and working directly with vendors, especially with small value purchases and complex purchases involving multiple functions such as data preparation, personalization, and distribution.

We reorganized our Customer Service unit to include teams of individuals assigned to specific departments and agencies. These teams will provide conventional printing support, but will also be available to work with program managers in planning the best solutions to their information dissemination needs, such as content development, graphic design, web site design and hosting, rich media and print-on-demand.



- Our internal production capabilities will be focused in support of the Official Journals of Government, including the *Congressional Record* and *Federal Register*, Congress's requirements, and security and intelligent documents. We will engineer a new, more flexible and cost efficient printing platform for these documents in conjunction with the move to new facilities.

Security and intelligent documents—including passports, identification cards, and potentially involvement with other documents such as birth certificates and drivers licenses—will be a growing and increasingly important business line for GPO, and there are new statutory requirements for these documents in the recently-passed 9/11 intelligence reform bill.

We will continue to use our expertise in this area to guide Federal agencies in the design and application of complex intelligent documents. At present GPO is designing a new production platform for passports that will be moved, when appropriate, to the new Washington facility and duplicated at an ancillary facility in Nevada to enable load-balanced production at both sites.

- In the future, the Federal Depository Library Program will determine the content of GPO's new Digital Content System, set standards for Federal documents, authenticate documents, catalog and manage the content, and determine the standards for preservation of the content for future generations. This will be done in context with the development of the Digital Content System.

The program will also set the standards for digitizing retrospective tangible documents, acquire both the tangible documents and digitizing services, and provide quality assurance for the content. The goal is to digitize all retrospective documents that can be authenticated back to the Federalist Papers.

- We also plan to establish a new business unit called Digital Media Services that will provide a platform for training GPO employees in 21st century workforce skills while providing retrospective document scanning services for the Federal Depository Library Program and Federal agencies.

Employees will be selected to work in this unit based on their interest, aptitude, existing skills and education. Jobs will range from simple machine operation to complex editorial requirements. All, however, will be under the umbrella of 21st century workforce skills. After training, some employees will be rotated back to other business units to utilize their newly learned skills.

To carry out this vision, we'll reconfigure our organizational structure around six new business lines, supported by an Oracle enterprise system software and applications. The new organization will assist GPO's transformation into a more efficient and customer-driven agency, implement a more integrated approach to printing, publishing, and information dissemination requirements, employ more advanced business systems, and improve management control and decision making.

Finally, we are working on relocating our headquarters to new facilities sized and equipped for our future requirements. Our current facilities, the oldest dating back 100 years, together comprise four buildings and vacant land on approximately 8.5 total acres. They are both too large and too antiquated for our current and future needs, and they continue to drain the organization of vital resources needed for investments in new technology.

To minimize the burden on the taxpayers, we propose to offer this property for redevelopment under a long term lease and to use the value of the lease to build and equip new GPO facilities that will meet our current mission requirements and be flexible enough to expand or contract to meet future requirements. We expect to relocate GPO's main facilities in the greater Washington, DC, area and locate a backup facility for security and intelligent documents and other requirements at the Nevada Test Site, one of the Nation's most secure Federal locations.

Conclusion

Printing, the predominant means for information exchange for centuries, has been superseded by electronic information technologies, which are now the preferred mechanism for producing and accessing Federal Government information.

It is clear that all future Government information, including text and graphics, still and moving images, and sound, will either be born digital or transformed into digital structure for manipulation, storage, and delivery to end users. It is the convergence of text, still and moving images, and sound into a single electronic content database that will revolutionize future communications.

The times have changed and the GPO must change with them if we are to continue carrying out our core mission. We need to forge a new GPO for the 21st century, one that is rooted in our core mission dating back to the Founders of our Nation, but which uses the technologies of today and tomorrow—not yesterday—to keep their vision alive. Our strategic vision for the GPO's future is dedicated to that purpose.

What will GPO finally look like in the 21st century?

Our digital technology will represent a 21st century model of excellence, in leading customers to digital solutions through effective leadership, employee assistance, and customer-driven partnerships.

Those solutions themselves will take full advantage of the opportunities provided by new and emerging technologies while resolving the questions posed by permanent access, authentication, versioning, digitization, standards, and accessibility.

Our digital information factory, relocated and fully equipped with the new technology, will provide the physical image that reflects GPO's full participation in the digital world.

And finally, we will be branded with a new organizational culture, as the men and women of the GPO work in an environment of intelligent risk taking that encourages continuous innovation, change, and improvement, all in the service of our ongoing mission of *Keeping America Informed*. There's an exciting world of opportunity ahead of us in the months and years to come.

Thank you again for having me here today, and now I understand there's some time to handle a few questions...

